

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

ED-75
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Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

March 26, 2004

Mr. Michael Reisner
Northern Plains Resource Council
2401 Montana Ave., Suite 200
Billings, Montana 59101

Re: Tongue River Railroad Company, Inc. – Finance Docket 31086 (Sub-No. 3) – Construction and Operation of the Western Alignment – National Historic Preservation Act Consultation Process

Dear Mr. Reisner,

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board's) Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is conducting an environmental review of Tongue River Railroad Company's (TRRC's) proposed rail construction and operation of the Western Alignment in Rosebud and Bighorn Counties, Montana, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and related environmental regulations, including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

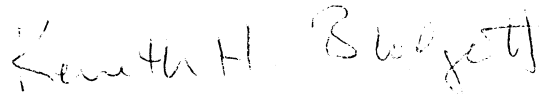
We have identified the Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC) as a potential consulting party to the Section 106 process of the NHPA and are writing to invite you to participate as a consulting party in the Section 106 process. Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the Section 106 process at 36 CFR Part 800, consulting parties participate throughout the Section 106 process and work with all involved parties to try to resolve any issues. However, the concurrence of consulting parties in the final outcome of the Section 106 process is not required. If you would like to be included as a consulting party, we request that you provide us with the name and contact information for the individual who will act as the spokesperson for NPRC throughout the Section 106 process.

SEA had initiated the NHPA Section 106 compliance process for Tongue River III in 1998 and had prepared a draft Programmatic Agreement (PA) in consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office; Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Tribe. SEA has resumed the review and approval process to complete the PA. The draft PA will be included as an appendix to the environmental document prepared for Tongue River III, a Supplement to the Final Environmental

Impact Statement (SEIS) which was prepared for Tongue River II.

If NPRC would like to participate in the NHPA Section 106 compliance process at this time as a consulting party, please provide us with the name and contact information for the individual who will act as the spokesperson for NPRC throughout the Section 106 process. If you would like more information on the consultation process or the role of consulting parties in the process, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at (202) 565-1554, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at blodgettk@stb.dot.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kenneth H. Blodgett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kenneth H. Blodgett
Environmental Protection Specialist
Section of Environmental Analysis